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Chairman: Mr. Asadi ..... (Islamic Republic of Iran)
later: Mr. Prendergast (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Jamaica)

Contents

Agenda item 95: Operational activities for development (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda Item 95: Operational activities for development (*continued*) (A/53/85, A/53/154, A/53/186, A/53/226, A/53/226/Add.1–4, A/53/363)

1. **Ms. Wörgetter** (Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, said that follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and the strategies resulting therefrom must be pursued in all operational activities. It must, however, be remembered that the aim was to simplify the system of operational activities and to ensure that these activities had an impact in diverse situations. The success of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) would largely determine the effectiveness of operational activities. UNDAFs should provide a strategic platform for the effective implementation of the goals agreed upon by Governments at major global conferences. They should be developed by country teams in close collaboration with Governments based on common priorities, coordinated strategies and an agreed division of labour. The European Union considered it imperative that an intergovernmental oversight mechanism for the Framework should be established and that the possibilities for joint programming should be explored.

2. In his report (A/53/226 and Add.1–4), the Secretary-General had pointed out that operational activities were more effective when the resident coordinator system was functioning well with the active participation of the host Government to ensure full ownership of development activities. Ideally, there should be local coordination with all development partners, including the donor community. The United Nations system should reward partnership, cooperation and teamwork. The role of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) had been particularly important in that regard. The pool of candidates for resident coordinators must be widened and efforts to recruit women should be increased. The European Union also supported ongoing decentralization of programming, which should be accompanied by corresponding decentralization of accountability and support budgets.

3. Joint country-based situation analyses were a key step in formulating UNDAFs and a prerequisite for system-wide efforts to harmonize, monitor and evaluate programme activities. The UNDAF had been more successful in countries which had started the process with a common country assessment. The European Union would actively pursue the development of common indicators and baseline data. Greater cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions had become a key factor in development assistance and the European Union looked forward to a comprehensive discussion of the experiments in Viet Nam and Mali for reciprocal involvement in preparing the UNDAF and the World Bank country assistance strategy. Further efforts in the area of common premises should be encouraged in order to help field-level coordination. The review of operational activities had also revealed that capacity-building thus far had not been defined within the United Nations development context.

4. The European Union agreed with the conclusions drawn during the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council that efforts to bridge the relief-to-development gap must be viewed from the humanitarian as well as the development angle. Poverty eradication, the key goal of development cooperation, was key to preventing the outbreak of conflicts. Since armed conflict set development back, it would be a good idea to address the root causes of potential conflict through a targeted use of development instruments.

5. The recently concluded negotiations on funding strategies for UNDP and UNFPA, which set a funding target and a resource goal to increase the predictability of resources, would put those funds in a better position to mobilize resources in the future and reduce over-dependence on a limited number of traditional donors. Increased efforts should also be made to reach the agreed official development assistance target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as soon as possible. Development assistance would not be effective unless there was consensus on the priorities related to international development targets, and the entire development community worked together to meet them.

6. Finally, the European Union welcomed the report on progress on the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children (A/53/186). It agreed that the well-being and rights of the child would require an assessment of the current situation and a review of progress achieved at the national and sub-national level, and therefore attached great importance to the preparatory process leading to the special session of the General Assembly in 2001. Given the multidimensional nature of child-related issues, that review would require a comprehensive approach taking into account the outcome not only of the World Summit for Children but also of the other summits and conferences which had taken place since. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirmed the central role of the Convention on the Rights

of the Child in all efforts to improve the situation of children, and UNICEF had realized that placing children at the centre of its activities required applying a rights-based approach to all its programmes. That approach should also guide the preparations for the special session.

7. **Mr. Valle** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the member and associated countries of the Common Market of the Southern Cone (MERCOSUR), said that while they welcomed recent efforts to rationalize the resources and to define more clearly the mandates of the various United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, they opposed the proposals to introduce thematic or financial conditionalities; such conditionalities were incompatible with the fundamental characteristics of development cooperation, as restated most recently in General Assembly resolution 52/203. They were concerned that, despite new global commitments and efforts to improve the system, flows of official development assistance, in particular from multilateral cooperation, were continuing to decline and had fallen, in 1997, to 0.22 per cent of the combined GNP of the developed countries, the lowest level ever since the adoption of the 0.7 per cent target.

8. One important topic for discussion was the type of relationship which the United Nations system for development cooperation should maintain with middle-income countries. While Governments of such countries regarded technical assistance provided by the United Nations system as more important than the financial assistance, access to basic resources was vital since it ensured a local presence for the United Nations system and served as catalyst for development projects. The United Nations should provide support to the economic and social development of all its Member States, including those which had achieved an intermediate level of development.

9. MERCOSUR welcomed the recent decision regarding the future funding strategy taken by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive board, and supported initiatives to attract resources from non-traditional sources of financing, including the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Appropriate rules for the administration of those funds in accordance with the fundamental characteristics of operational activities were urgently needed, however. The synergies between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should be broadened with a view to joint action to facilitate mobilization of resources for development projects. South-South cooperation deserved further promotion, and an operational strategy was needed to incorporate that modality in multilateral programmes and projects.

10. The MERCOSUR countries looked forward to receiving the first evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the United Nations Development Group; and supported those new mechanisms, as long as the individual mandates and characteristics of the various funds and programmes were preserved. While also supporting the strengthening of the role of resident coordinators, they believed that Governments should remain free to negotiate and implement projects directly with other parts of the system. Finally, decentralization of decision-making in programme countries through national execution was even more important in order to ensure the high quality and success of United Nations operational activities.

11. **Mr. Ahmed** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the current triennial review was different from earlier ones in that it focused on impact, built on the reform programme of the Secretary-General and was taking place at a time of unprecedented communication and coordination at the inter-agency and intergovernmental levels.

12. From the perspective of UNDP, the keynote of the triennial review was clearly the impact of operational activities. For the first time, the review was examining the actual difference that such activities made in the capacity of programme countries to improve the lives of the people. The continued documentation of that impact should provide a boost to the mobilization of resources for operational activities.

13. The Secretary-General's reform programme had provided the system with a set of tools which were transforming the way in which operational activities were conducted. The creation of the United Nations Development Group had allowed its operational entities to interact more closely than before and to address such issues as common premises and services and the resident coordinator system. That system, although it had existed for over two decades, had received an important impetus from the reform programme. Measures were being taken to strengthen the commitment, participation and sense of ownership of all members of the country team, especially by widening the pool of recruitment for resident coordinators and requiring them to promote the interests of the system as a whole. The reaffirmation of the existing link between UNDP and the resident coordinator system was the best assurance that that system would continue to be managed effectively and that operational activities would continue to be in line with national government priorities. The Development Assistance Framework was another important outcome of the reform programme and should be seen as the coherent response to the national priorities expressed in the country strategy note

or in other government planning documents. The pilot experiences had revealed the importance of government involvement in the process from the beginning. It was anticipated that it would lead to simplification and harmonization of programming and operational procedures.

14. Finally, the triennial review was taking place at a time of unprecedented willingness of United Nations entities to collaborate at the Headquarters, regional and country levels. There was also a strong link between inter-agency coordination and the deliberations of such intergovernmental bodies as the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee. In that context, UNDP had come out with five specific products: new system-wide guidelines on the programme approach, national execution and administrative management as well as a second guidance note to the resident coordinator system on conference follow-up and a matrix to facilitate inter-agency collaboration in poverty eradication.

15. **Ms. King** (United States of America) said that her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/226 and Add.1–4) and supported most of its recommendations. The results of the 18 Development Assistance Framework pilot projects should be carefully reviewed before any final conclusions were drawn. At the same time, development agencies should continue working towards the progressive expansion of the UNDAF process. Greater efforts must be made to enhance coordination, simplify planning and programming procedures and reduce workloads. Donor and programme countries alike should oppose any changes that would unduly burden resident coordinators or complicate the process.

16. Her delegation urged the United Nations Development Group to continue to reinforce the resident coordinator system and work towards creating common premises and shared services. An objective and transparent selection process for resident coordinators and continued support for the incorporation of a gender perspective in programming, implementation and monitoring of operational activities would also be welcome.

17. Her delegation supported a human rights-based approach to development, one that supported government policies that promoted the progressive achievement of economic, social and cultural rights. Good governance, institution-building and entrepreneurial development were key to the realization of those rights. It also welcomed the increased coordination and partnership between the United Nations funds and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions. With the strengthened resident coordinator system, the United Nations had a distinct comparative advantage in promoting the follow-up to the outcome of the international conferences.

18. One of the greatest challenges facing operational activities was their role in complex emergencies and post-crisis situations. A comprehensive approach must be developed, and the role of the Deputy Secretary-General in that process was welcome. Greater participation and coordination with civil society and the private sector was critical to the execution of relief and development work in countries facing emergency situations. In support of those goals, the Secretary-General should develop a mechanism for integrating development cooperation and humanitarian assistance with peace-building activities and post-conflict assistance.

19. Turning to funding issues, she welcomed the positive conclusion of negotiations on UNDP and UNFPA funding strategies and noted that similar discussions were currently under way for UNICEF. The United States remained strongly committed to the development work of the United Nations and supported the increasing focus on the key components of sustainable human development. It remained the single largest overall contributor to UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Food Programme (WFP).

20. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that the policy governing the operational activities had been evolving over the past 20 years and there was a growing consensus that the activities of the United Nations system should buttress national institutional capacity and strengthen human resources development. The transition from limiting responsibility to the provision of financial and technical assistance to ensuring result-oriented outcomes had been a major shift in approach.

21. In another significant policy reorientation, the eradication of poverty had emerged as the highest priority. The issues of population, health, human rights, gender and children were viewed as integral components in the attack on poverty. It had also become imperative for the United Nations development system to support national efforts at capacity-building. The reform measures initiated by the Secretary-General were expected to increase the impact of the United Nations system in the delivery of operational activities.

22. Operational activities for development should be directed more towards the provision of support to national mechanisms and building up national capacities to follow up on and implement the outcomes of global conferences. Non-State actors had increasingly been working as agents of change and conduits for the achievement of global goals, and the United Nations system should make increasing and

better use of those resources. Operational activities should assist the development of a synergy with civil society, NGOs and the private sector.

23. Bangladesh was concerned that the increasing demand from the United Nations system in terms of development activities had not been matched by increased commitments. And it therefore called upon its development partners to take into account the proposals of the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes to arrest and reverse the decline in core and non-core resources, for without a continuous and assured flow of resources the quest for development would always be elusive.

24. **Mr. Kolby** (Norway) said that while progress had been made towards achieving the goals set by the World Summit for Children, there were large geographical variances both between and within countries, and it was now time to focus on the poorest segments and to work towards eliminating the gender gap. Basic social services were needed for improving the condition of the world's children. The challenges related to implementing the rights of the child now had to be addressed.

25. Turning to the triennial policy review of operational activities, he said that development cooperation fundamentally consisted of two components: resources and how they were used. Any comprehensive review of United Nations operational activities must address both in a balanced manner. The declining trend in ODA was of grave concern since it severely limited the impact of operational activities at the country level. Norway reiterated its call to all donor countries to fulfil their pledge to provide at least 0.7 per cent of GNP for ODA. Efforts must be directed at mobilizing resources from those countries that did not contribute according to their capacity. The fall in ODA was often referred to as "donor fatigue" as if donor countries were simply tired of contributing resources to development. In fact, an important cause of the decline in ODA was the erroneous belief that the resources concerned were having little impact on development; the way to address that misconception would be to communicate more effectively what impact development cooperation was having. It was of fundamental importance to decide how operational activities could be improved in order better to achieve the agreed goals and assist recipient countries in their development efforts.

26. A fragmented United Nations system placed an unnecessary burden on Governments of recipient countries and frustrated their efforts to follow coherent and long-term development strategies. The lack of coordination was wasteful; a more coherent and effective system was needed. Against that background, Norway welcomed the introduction of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and encouraged further improvements in its application. It was of key importance that the General Assembly should give a clear and unequivocal endorsement of the mechanism. Preliminary assessments appeared to suggest two things: firstly, that it was necessary to ensure that at country level Governments were fully committed to making certain that the priorities of the United Nations system were aligned with the host country's development strategies; secondly, that in order for UNDAF to be an effective instrument of coordination it must result in the simplification of existing planning and programming procedures.

27. Understanding of the complex and integrative nature of operational activities for development must be matched by the way in which those operational activities were organized; the acid test was their impact at country level. There had been important progress, such as the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, and more work should be done to harmonize programming cycles, integrate cross-cutting issues, joint programming and establish theme-based groups. Norway's support for United Nations operational activities for development was related to what it considered to be the United Nations system's unique comparative advantages vis-à-vis the other channels for ODA, namely its true multilateral character, universality and neutrality. Norway firmly believed that stronger cooperation with other development organizations at the country level, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions and bilateral donors, would accentuate those unique characteristics and strengthen support for the United Nations system. Coherence and coordination were not ends in themselves: the motive in reviewing the operational activities of the United Nations must be to improve their impact and consequently strengthen them through increasing their relevance and importance. Norway looked forward to developing a resolution that gave the United Nations system clear and substantive guidance on those issues.

28. **Mr. Parajuli** (Nepal) said that at a time when the world was undergoing great changes in the wake of globalization and economic liberalization, the agenda of the developing countries included priorities and objectives that were consistent with a globally changing competitive economy. Triangular cooperation involving technical, financial and other support by developed countries and international organizations for South-South cooperation would contribute to the promotion of cooperation among developing countries.

29. Nepal agreed with the views expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/226 and Add.1–4) to the

effect that development cooperation operated increasingly in a context of interdependence among nations. Developing countries needed the support and assistance of the United Nations system to enhance their capacity to integrate into a globalizing economy. Eradication of poverty, which was related to a variety of economic and social issues, was an underlying priority.

30. Only with adequate, predictable, long-term and regular funding could United Nations funds and programmes play a central role in supporting developing countries in their various development processes. The current funding for core resources had not been generating sufficient resources to meet the targets set and the new requirements that emanated from recent United Nations conferences. United Nations operational activities should be both need-based and launched at the request of the developing countries consistent with their own development policies and priorities. National capacity-building was indispensable for achieving sustainability of operational activities, as were good governance at national and political levels and the active participation of civil society in development endeavours. He welcomed the fact that United Nations operational funds and programmes had continued to accord priority to the needs of the developing and the least developed countries, and urged that they undertake measures to enhance the efficiency and quality of their programme activities.

31. It was a matter of serious concern that with the continued decrease of core resources, developing countries were being compelled to stretch their programmes to fit longer time-frames, thereby adversely affecting implementation of poverty eradication and other programme activities. He, therefore, urged the United Nations system to intensify its search for additional funds and for a viable funding mechanism that would ensure predictable, continuous and assured financing.

32. *Mr. Prendergast (Jamaica), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

33. **Ms. Wensley** (Australia), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Canada and New Zealand, welcomed the Secretary-General's comprehensive and thoughtful report. One of the most critical issues he had raised was the importance of demonstrating results and impact at country level. The United Nations along with all other organizations using public funds was increasingly being called upon to show what was being achieved with the funds provided. Results and impact were directly linked to the mobilization of resources and to the achievement of goals agreed at various United Nations global conferences; accordingly more effort should be made to strengthen the monitoring, evaluation and performance assessment systems within individual organizations, and to encourage joint evaluations.

34. The second important issue he had raised was the need for enhanced programme coherence. Progress had been made, but much more remained to be done. One of the most important accomplishments of the United Nations Development Group had been the work it had done to strengthen the resident coordinator system, including broadening the base of recruitment and improving the training. Those efforts should continue, and should include periodic updates of selection criteria, relevant training to strengthen analytical and leadership skills, expansion of the pool of candidates, and increasing the number of women resident coordinators.

35. Australia favoured an incremental approach to the implementation of the UNDAF based on lessons learned from assessments made. Ways must be found to ensure the full and active participation of specialized agencies and the development of strong United Nations analytical capacities at country level, particularly in regard to the preparation of common country analyses. Steps must also be taken to encourage greater partnership between the funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks, particularly at country level. Full consultation with Governments was crucial.

36. As far as programming was concerned, she emphasized the importance of effective country-level follow-up to United Nations conferences and the furthering of the programme approach where possible; strengthening local capacity to facilitate national execution; national ownership; and ensuring the longer-term sustainability of projects. It was also essential that greater progress be made in harmonizing country programming processes. Harmonized programming cycles should lead to streamlined planning and implementation processes in the field and also to better programming and impact. National plans and priorities constituted the framework for all development activities, and each entity of the United Nations development system should act in accordance with the mandate and priorities given it by its respective governing body. That required the United Nations development system to balance the need for flexibility and responsiveness with the pressure to maintain overall coherence in activities. Operational activities should focus largely on supporting national efforts to implement the follow-up to United Nations international conferences.

37. Australia was particularly concerned with the interrelationship between emergency, peace-building and development activities. The triennial comprehensive policy

review should recommend a clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of the different United Nations players, and activities in support of the differing objectives should be programmed in a mutually reinforcing way and on the basis of initiatives supported by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) under the leadership of the Secretary-General. The resident coordinator system was well-positioned to play a leading role in that effort. The approach should ensure better transition from relief or post-conflict reconstruction to development.

38. The issue of resource mobilization was vital. It was important to provide secure and predictable resources to the United Nations development institutions. Australia also recognized the complementary role of non-core funding: it was important and strenuous efforts should be made to secure it.

39. The organizations of the United Nations development system should continue to promote human rights in their activities, and should address more systematically the human rights content and dimension in development activities.

40. **Mr. Sfeir-Younis** (World Bank) said that in 1998, for the first time in the history of the United Nations, a group of ambassadors had met the Bank's Executive Directors as a follow-up to the meeting of the Economic and Social Council held on 18 April. Such meetings would break down the artificial barriers between the two bodies, and provide a useful forum for exchanging views on a number of pressing global problems. Another opportunity for cooperation and interaction between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was the ACC, which during the current year would be addressing the Asian economic crisis, different elements of the reform process and the Secretary-General's report on Africa.

41. The World Bank agreed with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and the European Union to the effect that the key element of the partnership strategy was the creation of an effective environment for partnership at country level. The starting point for the Bank's partnership agenda was its relationship with developing countries and the impact of its services on their development. The Bank saw its role as being to enhance an individual Government's ability to address each and every development activity, and consequently it was prepared to provide a number of instruments and make absolutely sure that any form of cooperation was designed with the individual country's needs in mind. For that approach to succeed it was necessary for each country to develop its own vision of its future. A number of pilot countries were being selected where the new approach could be implemented.

42. The policy on partnership was only one part of a broader effort – termed the strategic compact – to make the World Bank responsive to client needs and adapted to the major changes taking place in the external environment by making it much more client-focused and demand-driven; halting the decline in the quality of its lending; enhancing all mechanisms that would enable the Bank to become a premier development institution and turning it into a real catalyst for change. The World Bank now had several director-level posts at country level; that change had been welcomed by many countries, for it provided a unique opportunity to enhance cooperation at country level.

43. A great effort had been made to improve the synergies of the programming processes of the World Bank and the United Nations in Mali and Viet Nam, where cooperation had entailed an intensive exchange of views and adherence to a commonly shared process whereby the United Nations agencies and programmes defined their development assistance programme and the Bank defined its country assistance strategy.

44. A large number of very effective partnerships were being formed at country and regional levels. Recent agreements with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations had enabled both institutions to design and implement a large number of food security and rural development programmes in the lowest income countries of Africa. The World Bank's agreement with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was enhancing cooperation and coordination in those countries that were in post-conflict situations and where economic reconstruction had become an essential strategy for attaining peace and prosperity. In the past two years a very comprehensive dialogue had begun with UNDP regarding a number of areas of mutual interest.

45. In the new era of cooperation it was necessary to adhere strongly to at least three fundamental principles: front-line cooperation in which cooperation agreements were tailored to and reflected countries' priorities and needs; cost-effectiveness, competitive advantage and diversity in mandates; and a reorientation of value systems on the basis that the realities of the next millennium should be the ones that defined the various forms of cooperation between the World Bank and the United Nations. The most fundamental elements of effective cooperation between the two were leadership and mutual trust.

46. **Ms. Sibal** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), referring to the report of the Secretary-General, said that it was timely in that it drew attention to issues arising from greater globalization.

UNESCO wholeheartedly endorsed the new themes proposed for reports to be made within the next three years to the Economic and Social Council and to the General Assembly (para. 15). The themes, in areas such as gender in development and poverty eradication, and human development and sustainable development were at the heart of her organization's mandate and involvement. With respect to the impact of operational activities, she wholly agreed with paragraph 39 of the report, noting that the entire United Nations system participated in the country strategy note exercise and the pilot project on UNDAF. The priorities of UNESCO were those adopted by the global conferences, to the extent to which Member States wished to retain them at the national level. However, UNESCO wondered whether the new framework being proposed in paragraph 43 would not duplicate other efforts such as UNDAF.

47. Concerning the gender perspective, since inter-agency groups dedicated to incorporating that perspective into all operational activities already existed in a majority of countries, United Nations country teams should be encouraged to intensify their collaboration in national programmes. It would also be a good idea to focus on the increasing feminization of poverty. UNESCO had always maintained close links with non-governmental organizations and civil society and those partners participated actively in its work. With regard to regional dimensions, it was important for resident coordinators to take into account the mandates and programmes of all agencies not represented in their countries of residence in order to establish strong links between the national and regional levels of operations.

48. It was important to note, with regard to the recommendations concerning the delegation of authority, that the Secretary-General wished to have an evaluation for the whole system. Her organization agreed with all the recommendations contained in paragraphs 114 and 115 on national execution. With regard to humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, peace-building and development, which should be seen as integral parts of the efforts to promote a culture of peace, UNESCO wholeheartedly agreed with paragraph 123 of the report. It was extremely important to establish precise linkages between programming mechanisms or frameworks relating to development and those relating to humanitarian assistance.

49. **Mr. Tiendrebeogo** (Burkina Faso) said that the challenge facing both the United Nations and Member States was to establish an operational framework that was flexible enough to adapt to and survive any kind of turbulence that might arrive. The positive impact of operational activities was their ultimate objective and their impact on the level of poverty of the populations, the yardstick of success. In that regard, it was difficult to draw any general, definitive conclusions on the basis of just six evaluations carried out within a very restricted field of investigation. However, since the Secretary-General's report (A/53/226 and Add.1–4) concluded that those evaluations had, on the whole, yielded good results, he supported the recommendation to extend the scope and geographical coverage of the exercise. The analysis of the impact on the strengthening of capacity-building and national organizations should be pursued and broadened. The lessons to be drawn therefrom would be useful for the full implementation of the principle of national execution. He also supported the recommendations regarding the need for a more systematic approach within the United Nations to capacity-building.

50. As far as the follow-up to world conferences was concerned, many developing countries were having serious difficulties implementing the various programmes of action. The reasons for that included weak national capacities, lack of appropriate follow-up instruments as well as the lack of financial resources. The international community should therefore make a more effective financial commitment to institutions operating in that field. The world's main commitment in that area must be to the eradication of poverty. In that regard, he wished to pay tribute to all the initiatives undertaken by the various executive boards to find solutions to the critical financial situations they were facing. At the same time his delegation wondered whether there was a genuine political will to end the crisis.

51. **Mr. Tchoulkov** (Russian Federation) said that the efficiency of operational activities of the United Nations was based on the strengthening of national capacities. Improved governance at all levels as well as the active involvement of civil society in the development process were vital to national capacity-building. To that end, the practice of national execution should be promoted. His delegation endorsed the steps to carry out the Secretary-General's proposal on bolstering team spirit in the activities of operational programmes and funds in the field. It also favoured the measures being taken to improve the quality of services rendered, boost the efficiency of programme activities and decentralize them, strengthen national offices, step up monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, simplify administrative procedures and achieve greater responsibility and accountability. He welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). While noting the increase in the number of resident coordinators from other United Nations system organizations, he said that preserving the practice of holding two offices simultaneously, namely, the office of United Nations resident coordinator, combined with the office of

UNDP resident representative, was quite justified in order to ensure efficient coordination in the field. Coordination should also encompass humanitarian emergency assistance, which was an important element of the international community's joint efforts to ensure sustainable development.

52. In order to ensure the efficiency of operational activities, it was crucial to find adequate sources of funding. His delegation shared the concern of many Member States with regard to the reduction in the core resources of United Nations operational programmes and funds and welcomed the efforts by UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme to improve the efficiency and quality of their programme activities. In that regard, increased cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions was particularly important especially in areas such as social development, eradication of poverty and environmental protection. His delegation also commended the strengthening of the universal nature of United Nations operational programmes and funds as well as efforts to meet the special needs of economies in transition. The interests of such economies would be met by focusing operational activities on assistance in the building and development of market economy institutions, accelerating the integration of countries in transition into the world economy, ensuring macroeconomic stability, developing entrepreneurship and increasing investments. The Russian Federation supported the measures proposed by the Secretary-General with regard to the preparations for the United Nations special session on the review of the World Summit for Children.

53. **Mr. Relang** (Marshall Islands) said that the ODA received by his country during the past two years had been declining steadily and that funding under bilateral agreements with the United States of America had also been decreasing significantly. His Government had decided to diversify its efforts; however, a number of competing priorities had made such efforts very complicated. His Government's efforts to revitalize and restructure the public sector would have a significant social impact. Moreover, his country did not have the human resources to prepare the detailed reports required to fulfil many of its international commitments.

54. The Pacific Island countries in general, and the Marshall Islands in particular, did not receive assistance commensurate with their needs, either from bilateral sources or from the United Nations system. In that regard, his Government would be interested in exploring the possibilities of holding a United Nations-sponsored project proposal workshop in the Marshall Islands. It would also like to see more activities in the region by the Department of Public Information in disseminating information to the non-governmental sector. Earlier on in the year, his Government had hoped that the new United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP) would provide new resources for the sustainable development needs of island countries. His delegation was not satisfied that the Fund functioned in a transparent manner and wished to have further information on its future operation.

55. **Mr. Aung** (Myanmar) said that the persistent insufficiency of resources for operational activities for development of the United Nations was threatening the capacity of United Nations funds and programmes to respond to the needs of developing countries. The international community therefore must cooperate in order to find solutions to that problem. In that regard, operational activities for development should increasingly take into account the differences in levels of development of countries. South-South cooperation was an emerging theme which could help to resolve many of the problems facing developing countries.

56. The transition process upon which his country had embarked had necessitated extensive changes to the basic infrastructure of the State. His Government had received cooperation from its regional partners. Indeed, a basic element of South-South cooperation was the private sector, which was likely to play an increasingly important role in the country's economy. Many areas, such as transport, investment, science and technology and food and agriculture, could benefit from South-South cooperation. The international community should give more support to technical and economic cooperation among developing countries. Assistance from all sources, including relevant multilateral institutions and non-State actors, was most welcome in that context.

57. **Mr. Rohner** (Observer for Switzerland) said that the impact evaluations, which Switzerland had supported and co-financed, had clearly revealed the paramount importance of capacity-building in the development process and the significant role played by the United Nations system in building and using local capacity. The United Nations should become even more active in that field because of its clear comparative advantage. Switzerland would continue to support the impact evaluations and it would also contribute to the publication and dissemination of the evaluation reports. In his delegation's view, UNDAF, together with the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, would greatly help to improve the Organization's operational activities. The assessment of the pilot phase had demonstrated, *inter alia*, the need for the active involvement of Governments, and for an approach that took into account

individual country situations, and the importance of starting the process by a common country assessment. The resident coordinator system had made progress with regard to broadening selection and recruitment, particularly with respect to training and gender balance.

58. It was essential that the system should remain rooted in a truly operational environment. Accordingly, the coordination function of UNDP at the heart of the United Nations system must be clearly reconfirmed and remain unquestioned, at least until the next triennial policy review. Switzerland hoped that the improvement of the functioning and impact of the United Nations system's development activities would halt and eventually reverse the present decline in funding under ODA. Since other multilateral institutions and regional development banks and funds were also actively competing for the same ODA resources, there was a need for more cooperation among United Nations entities and for clearer commitment on the part of traditional and future donors.

59. **Mr. Kanju** (Pakistan) said that while Pakistan recognized the need for programmatic coherence, it believed that operational activities should be flexible enough to respond to specific national development requirements. His delegation supported the steps being taken to ensure programmatic coherence and mutual enforcement under UNDAF, but deemed it extremely important to ensure that the Governments concerned had full ownership and approval of the UNDAF process. Operational activities should be increasingly focused on providing support in the coordinated follow-up to global conferences and internationally agreed strategies and targets should be integrated into such operational activities. Since Governments were the key actors in the implementation of global conferences, such implementation should be pursued in accordance with the policies of each programme country.

60. In his delegation's view, the implementation of programmes through the national execution modality should be encouraged, and identification and management of the projects and programmes should be entrusted to Governments. Noting that his Government had decided that national execution would be the preferred mode of execution during the first country cooperation framework for the period 1998–2003, he said that the reporting requirements under the national execution modality should be brought into line with national systems.

61. The strengthening of cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the rest of the United Nations system should be undertaken in full consultation with the host country and with the full recognition of different perspectives, mandates, structures and methods of work of those institutions. The neutrality of United Nations activities should be maintained. While his Government favoured the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the programming and implementation of the development activities of the United Nations system, it believed that the assistance to non-governmental organizations should be channelled through Governments so as to ensure accountability and greater transparency.

62. He noted that the amount made available to the United Nations system for operational activities had declined in the past three years and that there was an increasing tendency to earmark funding for such activities, making them donor- rather than demand-driven. The role played by the United Nations system was qualitatively different from that of other external development partners and should be preserved. He expressed concern at the inadequacy of United Nations development resources and the hope that the recent decision regarding funding strategies adopted by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board would facilitate the attainment of the annual target of $1.1 billion. In that regard, he stressed the underlying importance of political will. His delegation did not object to proposals for seeking new sources of funding, provided that the neutrality and multilateralism of operational activities remained unaffected. In order for reform measures to succeed, predictable, adequate funding for the funds and programmes must be ensured. In conclusion, he praised the work of UNDP and the leadership of its outgoing Administrator, Mr. Speth.

63. **Mr. Kebede** (Ethiopia) said that assistance provided by the various United Nations agencies had helped promote sustainable development in Ethiopia and his Government was extremely grateful to those agencies.

64. Although the United Nations agencies operating in Ethiopia were already participating in the implementation of sector programmes, initiatives such as the country strategy note, the country cooperation framework and the recently adopted UNDAF had not yet been elaborated. Such initiatives should be integrated into the Government's broader national development strategy. United Nations involvement must be based on government priorities and sufficiently flexible to respond to the country's specific needs.

65. The triennial comprehensive policy review should focus on the definition of clear and practical guidelines for the implementation of the various principles the Committee had agreed on over the years. His Government was making every effort to ensure that the activities of the United Nations funds and programmes conformed to the principles

of, *inter alia*, programme approach and national execution modality outlined in General Assembly resolutions 47/199 and 50/120, and in various decisions of the Economic and Social Council. The degree of commitment to that modality varied considerably among the United Nations agencies. In that context, his delegation fully supported the finalization of UNDP guidelines for national execution, which focused on strengthening national capacities in order to enable Governments to achieve national self-reliance (A/53/226/Add.1, para. 112). It hoped that other United Nations agencies as well would respect the principles of national execution and government ownership of programmes. The latter could best be achieved by integrating cooperation programmes into countries' national planning and budgeting processes. Serious consideration should be given to that matter during the current triennial review. His delegation was equally concerned at the delay in programme implementation caused by lags in the disbursement of funds related to Executive Board procedures and complicated reporting requirements.

66. His delegation concurred with the Secretary-General on the importance of the follow-up to global conferences and the role of the resident coordinator system and the regional dimensions of operational activities during the triennial policy review. He cautioned, however, against compromising available resources for important programme areas in the process of assessing the follow-up to global conferences. Thus far, progress in carrying out operational activities on a regional basis had been unsatisfactory.

67. Ironically, official development assistance had declined to the lowest-ever level just when United Nations agencies had adopted a host of reform measures. Unless that trend was reversed it could diminish the unique potential of the United Nations to provide assistance based on the principles of multilateralism, neutrality, universality and grants. His delegation therefore called on all development partners to honour their commitment to meeting the 0.7 per cent target for official development assistance. It also welcomed the new funding strategy recently adopted by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. Such new strategies should focus on obtaining new resources rather than on replacing traditional donor support.

68. His delegation welcomed the prominent role of the resident coordinator system in the reform effort. An in-depth examination of the role, institutional function and authority of the resident coordinators would surely improve inter-agency coordination. His delegation opposed any hasty, full-scale implementation of the UNDAF programming mechanism without sufficient and thorough analysis and assessment of the pilot-phase projects. The UNDAF must first demonstrate its comparative advantage within the whole system of development cooperation; the decision as to whether or not to introduce it should be left to the discretion of each programme country.

69. **Mr. Yuan Shaofu** (China) said that his delegation attached great importance to operational activities for development and was prepared to increase its cooperation with them. The universality, multilateralism, neutrality and grant nature of those activities must be preserved and the overall reform of the United Nations should be aimed at strengthening, rather than weakening, them.

70. It was regrettable that official development assistance had reached an unprecedented low, accounting for only 0.22 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries. The decrease in core resources, which had seriously hindered operational activities for development, was a matter of serious concern. The new funding strategy for core resources adopted by the funds and programmes could not be effective without strong political will on the part of donors. The principal source of core resources must continue to be the developed countries. He expressed the hope that they would adhere to the relevant General Assembly resolutions with a view to ensuring that voluntary contributions reached agreed targets and that core resources for operational activities were available on a predictable, continuous, and assured basis.

71. Operational activities must be country-driven and able to respond to the needs of programme countries in a flexible manner. Their emphasis must be on capacity-building. His delegation supported the gradual and widespread implementation of UNDAFs, which should be jointly formulated by United Nations agencies and recipient Governments, taking into account national development plans and priorities in order to increase the sense of national ownership and identification.

72. **Mr. Öztürk** (Turkey) said that Turkey had benefited greatly from operational activities for development. The United Nations system had supported Turkey's participation in and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits as well as environmental programmes, including its National Environment Action Plan. UNDP was supporting a number of cost-shared, nationally executed programmes in Turkey. In addition, Turkey was one of the UNDAF pilot countries; its UNDAF should be ready by the end of the year. In turn, it was actively cooperating with various developing countries, particularly those in the Black Sea region.

73. His delegation believed that strengthening the resident coordinator and field office functions would enable some of

the United Nations specialized agencies with limited funds to provide technical support to programme countries. In the area of technical cooperation, coordination between relevant international and national organizations was vital, as was coordination at the national level. In that connection, he noted that the Turkish authorities were having difficulty keeping up with frequent, and sometimes unnecessary, changes in United Nations procedures and norms.

74. In conclusion, he stressed the importance of strengthening operational activities at the regional and subregional levels, consistent with paragraph 20 of General Assembly resolution 50/120. He also stressed the need for cooperation between the United Nations system and regional and subregional economic associations with a view to preventing duplication, optimizing the use of scarce resources and enhancing the capacities of such associations through networking, the transfer of expertise and normative guidelines.

75. **Mr. Young-Seok Kim** (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation attached great importance to the triennial comprehensive policy review as a timely means of implementing the Secretary-General's reform measures and of adapting the Organization to the rapidly changing world economic environment. His delegation supported the institutional changes in development operations introduced during the past three years. It welcomed the establishment of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and its streamlining and restructuring processes and hoped that planning and programme support procedures would be further simplified. In that connection, he hailed the progress achieved in harmonizing the programme and budget cycles of the funds and programmes, but cautioned that efforts to improve coordination should not create additional administrative burdens.

76. His delegation supported the strengthening of the regional coordinator system through, *inter alia*, the establishment of United Nations houses. The United Nations houses would also play a vital role in reinforcing linkages among donors, programme country Governments and other development partners. He called for improved selection criteria and training of regional coordinators in the context of decentralization and the delegation of authority. UNDAFs would become a key instrument in ensuring country-specific coordination at the field level. In that connection, they must respect the national priorities of programme countries. Eventually, specialized agencies, other international development partners, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and civil society should also be incorporated into the Frameworks. The United Nations could play a leading coordinating role in that process. His delegation supported increased interaction between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. It hoped that the UNDAF pilot projects in Viet Nam and Mali, which involved the World Bank, would constitute a step in that direction.

77. His delegation also supported wider application of the programme approach and capacity-building strategy through increased national execution modalities. To that end, regional initiatives, such as South-South cooperation in the form of technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC), should be further developed. His delegation agreed with the report of the Secretary-General that TCDC should be fully integrated into the regular operational activities of the United Nations. In general, his delegation wished to see greater emphasis on the regional dimension of development cooperation and on the role of the regional commissions. In conclusion, his delegation welcomed the progress achieved in the consideration of funding strategies by the executive boards of the funds and programmes. It hoped that the new results-based strategies would enhance both programme efficiency and the political will necessary to increase available resources.

78. **Mr. Osei-Danquah** (Ghana) said that the areas of activity outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (A/53/226 and Add.1–4) reflected the interests of developing and developed countries alike. In particular, the focus on population, health and education would be useful in dealing with the problems of poverty and the brain-drain in Africa. His delegation agreed with the comments contained in the report regarding the importance of capacity-building in the public and private sectors, as well as in civil society, and of improved governance. In many countries, including Ghana, greater interaction among the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and local stakeholders was sharpening the focus and improving the impact of national programmes and policies. Convinced that even greater coordination on the ground would enhance the coherence and effectiveness of development cooperation, his delegation looked forward to the assessment of the pilot phase of UNDAF later in the year. For purposes of that evaluation, it urged programme countries to show greater interest in responding to questions on the activities of the United Nations system.

79. The effectiveness of the resident coordinator system, the capacity of local stakeholders and the involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions would be crucial to integrating internationally agreed goals and individual country objectives into operational activities for development. Closer cooperation between the United Nations system and the

Bretton Woods institutions at the country level must be encouraged.

80. Ghana had always been in the forefront of regional and subregional integration efforts in Africa. It therefore supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 56 concerning the regional dimension in development cooperation. In that connection, the role of the regional commissions must be strengthened. The resident coordinator system, the participation of all relevant United Nations agencies and the creation of a "United Nations House" and a "virtual house" connecting the United Nations system would enhance such cooperation.

81. It was to be hoped, that the reform of the Organization and the positive outcome of UNDP/UNFPA negotiations on funding strategies would help to reverse the decline in contributions to core resources and official development assistance. He recalled the unique strengths of operational activities for development, including their universal, voluntary and grant nature, their neutrality and their multilateralism. In conclusion, he suggested that political authorities should promote development cooperation to their constituents, rather than leaving the task of public awareness-building to the United Nations system alone.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.